

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FH
NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-0090
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EXPLAINING WESTERN SOCIETIES

ANNCR:

RECENT SOVIET STATEMENTS -- FOR BOTH INTERNAL AND FOREIGN CONSUMPTION -- HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT WESTERN BROADCASTS THAT REPORT THE DEBATE IN WESTERN COUNTRIES ABOUT DETENTE AND SOVIET-WESTERN RELATIONS. THIS PROMPTS SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM VOA NEWS ANALYST JOHN ALBERT ABOUT THE DIFFICULTIES OF GIVING AN ADEQUATE EXPLANATION FOR MAJOR TRENDS OF THOUGHT IN PLURALISTIC SOCIETIES -- INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES.

VOICE:

THE ESSENCE OF SOVIET CRITICISM IS THAT WESTERN MEDIA -- PARTICULARLY AMERICAN BROADCASTS -- GIVE TOO MUCH PROMINENCE TO CRITICAL VOICES IN THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER WESTERN DEMOCRACIES. ACCORDING TO SOVIET CRITICS, WESTERN MEDIA THUS MISREPRESENT THE TRUE FEELING OF AMERICAN CITIZENS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF DETENTE AND THEIR DESIRE FOR A RELAXATION OF TENSIONS IN AMERICAN-SOVIET RELATIONS.

WHAT THE SOVIET SPOKESMEN SEEM TO MEAN IS THAT MORE AND PERHAPS EXCLUSIVE ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS -- SUCH AS REMARKS SUPPORTING DETENTE BY PRESIDENT FORD OR SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER IN THE UNITED STATES. BUT UNDER ANY SUCH RESTRICTION, THE BROADCASTS COULD NOT DO JUSTICE TO THE MANY RESPONSIBLE VOICES THAT MAKE THEMSELVES HEARD IN VARIOUS WESTERN COUNTRIES. IN BRITAIN, FOR EXAMPLE, OPPOSITION CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER MARGARET THATCHER HAS DRAWN SHARP SOVIET CRITICISM FOR QUESTIONS SHE

HAS RAISED ABOUT THE SOVIET MILITARY BUILDUP. HERE IN THE UNITED STATES, CRITICS ARE HEARD AND QUESTIONS RAISED IN CONGRESS, IN THE NEWS MEDIA AND IN VARIOUS PUBLIC FORUMS.

LET US TAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, AMERICAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. IT IS A FACT OF LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES, AND ESPECIALLY THESE DAYS, THAT UNFAVORABLE OCCURRENCES ARE BEING AIRED WITH GREAT PROMINENCE. NO ACCURATE REPORTER COULD AVOID COVERAGE OF THESE EVENTS. THERE ARE, FOR INSTANCE, THE DETAILED CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY AND THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION. THERE IS A LOT OF UNFAVORABLE LIGHT ON THOSE ACTIONS WHICH WENT BEYOND THE LAW AND WHICH VIOLATED INDIVIDUALS' CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS. THIS SIMPLY IS PART OF EXPLAINING AMERICAN LIFE, AS IT REALLY IS.

IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS IT ALSO WOULD HARDLY BE SUFFICIENT TO PROVIDE ONLY OFFICIAL EXPLANATIONS OF AMERICAN ACTIONS AND POLICIES. CONGRESSIONAL AND EDITORIAL CRITICISM OF THESE POLICIES AND ACTIONS BELONG TO THE TOTAL PICTURE, AS MUCH AS THE SECRETARY OF STATE MAY DEPLORE THESE REACTIONS AND APPEAL FOR GREATER UNITY. (OPT) AMERICA CAN HARDLY BE UNDERSTOOD ABROAD WITHOUT A CONSIDERATION OF ALL THESE ELEMENTS WHICH HELP TO SHAPE THE FORMULATION OF FOREIGN POLICY AND WHICH DECIDE THE DEGREE OF SUPPORT IT FINDS AMONG THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. (END OPT)

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARE DOMINATED BY THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION. HERE AGAIN IT WOULD HARDLY BE SUFFICIENT FOR A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE THINKING OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO RESTRICT ONESELF TO A COVERAGE OF OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT

STATEMENTS, AS IMPORTANT AS THEY ARE, OF COURSE, IN THE OVERALL PICTURE. THIS APPLIES TO THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE, WHICH HAS RECEIVED, GREAT ATTENTION IN AMERICA, AND EVEN MORE SO TO THE PROGRESS OF TALKS ON LIMITING STRATEGIC ARMS AND TO DETENTE IN GENERAL. ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE LARGE MAJORITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE STILL FAVORS A RELAXATION OF TENSIONS. BUT A SIGNIFICANT SECTION OF CONGRESS AND THE PUBLIC IS DEEPLY WORRIED ABOUT WHAT IT REGARDS AS ONE-SIDED AMERICAN CONCESSIONS IN THE PROCESS OF DETENTE. THEY ARE WORRIED TOO, ABOUT SOVIET ACTIONS, AS IN ANGOLA, WHICH IN THEIR VIEW CLEARLY VIOLATE THE SPIRIT OF MUTUAL PLEDGES TO FOREGO UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE IN WORLD AFFAIRS. THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT BODY OF OPINION IN THE UNITED STATES WHICH SEES THE SOVIET UNION AS DISREGARDING THE DECISIONS OF THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE WHICH IT SIGNED. WITHOUT ATTENTION TO THIS CRITICAL OPINION MUCH OF AMERICA'S REACTION TO SOVIET POLICIES AND ACTIONS COULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD.

WHAT SEEMS TO BE FORGOTTEN IN SOVIET CRITICISM OF REPORTING IN THE WEST IS THAT IT WILL BE SOVIET POLICIES AND ACTIONS -- MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE -- THAT WILL DETERMINE AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION ON DETENTE, ON SALT, ON THE WHOLE AREA OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS. UNDERPLAYING THE CONCERN FELT IN THE UNITED STATES ABOUT THE SOVIET INTERPRETATION OF DETENTE WOULD, IN THE END, NOT SERVE THE GOAL OF REDUCING TENSIONS BUT WOULD LEAD INSTEAD TO SERIOUS MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF THE TREND OF AMERICAN THOUGHT.

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